



PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD,

TORONTO.

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REPORT

OF A

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

ON THE

MUSEUMS OF THE UNITED STATES

AND

CANADA.

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TORONTO.

1892.



REPORT

OF THE

ANNUAL COMMISSION

MUSEUMS OF THE UNITED STATES

CANADA

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

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## MUSEUM COMMITTEE:

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## REPORT OF THE MUSEUM COMMITTEE.

Your Committee beg leave to report as follows:—

On the 9th of October our Chief Librarian Mr. Bain, reported as follows:—

To D. A. O'SULLIVAN, Esq., Q.C., LL.D.,  
Chairman of the Library Committee:

I would beg to lay before you the following considerations in reference to the establishment of a Public Museum:

1. That the feeling in favour of such an institution has steadily grown during the past year, and also that it is desirable that it should be placed in Toronto, either under the direction of the Government of Ontario, the Canadian Institute, the Public Library, or some independent organization.
2. The Attorney-General informed a deputation representing the different Historical Societies of the Province that the Government, while feeling the importance of such work, did not see their way to erect a suitable building and undertake its management.



3 The Canadian Institute, to whom has been committed the task of collecting and reporting on the Archæological remains of the Province, has succeeded in gathering together a splendid nucleus for a museum, but are unable, through lack of funds, to provide accommodation for its treasures.

4. No other organization appears to exist in the city able to carry on the work.

5. The Public Library Board alone has special powers granted by Act of Parliament, Vic. 45, chap. 22, for the organization and management of a Public Museum.

6. A museum which would be representative of this Province would contain a full collection of specimens of its metals and metallic ores, economic minerals, fossils, natural history including botany, archæology and antiquities, together with all remains of historical and sociological interest. It would also contain a certain number of specimens in all these departments from older countries, for the purpose of instruction and comparison.

7. As a safe place, under efficient management, it would become the centre towards which valuable relics, interesting for their historical associations, would gravitate from all parts of the Province.

8. A museum on these lines would be of great educational value to the young, of commercial value to all interested in our minerals, invaluable to the student and an unfailing object of interest to all residents and strangers in the city.

9. The upper portion of the present building would only require some repairs and slight alterations, to fit it as a very suitable and attractive place for such a purpose, and as all the leases expire on January 1st, 1892, it would seem an opportune time to consider the advisability of at once taking the necessary steps.

10. A sufficient number of specimens could be secured to fill the entire hall occupied by the Athenæum Club, so that no delay need take place in opening the museum to the general public.

11. The cost of carrying on a museum and of purchasing specimens need not exceed three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per annum, which amount would be covered by the saving on the late Brockton branch, together with the increased assessment, without going beyond the customary quarter of a mill.

12. As a museum which will not be local but provincial, the Government of Ontario may justly be asked to make an annual grant on its behalf.

In the light of these facts I would beg to recommend the transmission to the Board of a proposal to establish a museum in January, 1892.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

October 5th, 1891.

JAMES BAIN, JR., *Chief Librarian.*

At the meeting held upon the same day the principle of this report was adopted, and it was referred to your Committee to make all necessary investigations in regard to obtaining the collections mentioned, and to consider what space is available and what alterations may be desirable in establishing the said Museum in the building; the Committee to report to the Board as early as possible.

Your Committee have looked into the statute respecting the establishment of Public Libraries, and are satisfied their proceedings are according to law in reference to this matter.

Your Committee have given this matter most careful consideration, and met on numerous occasions to discuss it. They found it advisable, after numerous consultations, to forward the following report to the Board:

BOARD ROOM, Nov. 30, 1891.

Your Committee beg to report that although the Board unanimously adopted the principle of establishing a Public Museum in this building your Committee are of opinion that it is highly desirable that some information should be obtained from similar Institutions before finally coming to more definite conclusions. The annual expense, the kind of building, the mode of heating and lighting, the collections which are popular, the general management, etc., etc., are all matters that should be thoroughly inquired into, and your Committees have been informed by the Managers of similar Institutions in the United States that the only way to ascertain these particulars satisfactorily would be by visiting them and they have offered to assist in every way in their power.

The Board therefore recommended that the Museum Committee be instructed to visit similar institutions in some of the large cities in the United States and Canada.

On the last week of November your Committee visited the Geological and Natural History Museum, Ottawa; the Redpath

Museum and Natural History Museum, Montreal; the Peabody, Harvard and Agassiz Museums at Boston and Cambridge; the Natural History and Art Museums of New York; the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, the Smithsonian Institution at Washington; the National Museum at Washington; the Polytechnic Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; the State Geological Museum, Indianapolis; the Art Museum, Cincinnati; the Museum of the Buffalo Natural History Society, and the Museum of the Buffalo Historical Society.

Your Committee are satisfied that a city of the size and importance of Toronto should have a Museum, from the fact that it has been found advisable to institute Museums in all cities of the same and larger growth in the United States, and that similar Museums are to be found in every city and town in the old world. Your Committee would emphasise the value of a collection of historical relics appertaining to this Province, and they would especially urge this, as owing to the removal from the country and loss by fire, a number of such relics is rapidly decreasing. One experienced curator said:

"It would seem as if it were almost the duty of a provincial museum to preserve and exhibit such historical relics and documents relating to the province in which it is situated as fall into its hands. These objects are of great interest to the general public and their meaning and import can be understood by everyone. The only danger in such collections is that they degenerate into mere unassorted masses of curiosities which have little historical value.

"As regards Indian relics they belong naturally to what would be called a department or section of ethnography, and should go into any scheme in which the illustration of the resources of a province are contemplated. They have very great interest for the general public, and must be included among the most popular objects of any museum, in view of the fact that the advances of civilization are very rapidly obliterating the records of aboriginal life on this continent. It is extremely important that all those objects which come under the general name of Indian relics should be carefully preserved."



In view of the fact that the Statute refers to a museum without indicating its character, it became necessary for your Committee first of all to examine very closely what is the fair interpretation of this word and within what lines the projected Museum may be fairly carried out, and it is desirable, therefore, that we should know—

#### WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

Your Committee report that they have found that museums of a comprehensive character include the various departments Geology, Paleontology, Archeology, Natural History, general Historical Relics. Other collections were reported relating to the Industrial Sciences and containing Technological exhibits.

Your Committee were informed that one of the best general museums on this continent was that at Cambridge, which is contained in a series of buildings connected with each other. The Philadelphia, Washington and Cambridge museums are the largest in America, but the best museum, apart from the importance of the specimens—that is, the best arranged museum—is the Redpath Museum in Montreal.

The tendency in large cities has been to specialize, and your Committee have had some difficulty in keeping in view the limits of a museum for a city of the size, requirements and expectations of the City of Toronto. Your Committee did not consider that they were at liberty to take into considerations the requirements of an educational or strictly scientific museum, and have limited themselves to what in their opinion would be a popular museum for the chief city of the Province.

Dr. Heilprin of Philadelphia, who is a distinguished authority, in answer to the question of what a museum ought to be, says as follows:

A. If you ask my opinion, I would state, in the first place, that the Museum, should contain in one part an illustration of the natural history resources of your state or province, containing everything; that is, there should be plants, animals, geological formations, mining enterprises, such as there may be, sections, as far as possible, of mines or at least of the deposits in mines, sections of shaft borings, of Artesian wells, arrangement of insects that may be considered of economic importance, that is, injurious to vegetation, insect with the plants upon which they feed. In other words it should be an epitome of the natural resources of your region.

Secondly. One part of it should be devoted to the student; there should be a synoptic collection, a collection representing the various types of animals, books giving an analysis of all the orders, likewise an epitome of geological science apart from geological mechanical science apart from the pure natural history of your own region, and

Thirdly. It should contain a proper representation of the natural histories of other countries, which should fill in the blank I should think primarily, the natural history of your country in all its shapes and forms. Second, a synoptic collection, giving the student an opportunity of studying step by step the principle factors that make up their own branch of history, whether zoology, botany or geology, and then the representation to a certain extent of the natural history of other parts of the world.

Q. Would you include any industrial exhibits in the museum, such as they have in the Smithsonian?

A. Not in a natural history museum. I should say no. There would be no end to the amount of space you would require.

"I should have added," he says further on, "that in making the collection for the State or Province that it is of equal importance to make a collection of the natural history objects at least in the immediate surroundings of Toronto, say within a radius of fifteen or twenty miles, I would perhaps put them before the State collection or at least of equal importance.

Q. You place them first?

A. I would give them very great prominence in any event, and I think that every form of natural history throughout the entire state should have its own representation. I think if you can do it, that you ought to have in connection with your museum a lecture hall; I think it is an absolute necessity. You start with an Institution and you think, "Oh well, perhaps no lectures will be delivered," but the opportunity for delivering the lecture presents itself almost immediately. If you can have lectures in the Museum, you will find that you will be able to raise an interest in all branches of learning. In our new building, the one which is just being completed,

we have a large lecture hall. I think it is essential that every institution of learning of that kind should have its lecture hall. You will find it remunerative; by delivering lectures at a modern price, you will be able to make an income towards carrying on your museum."

The acting curator in charge of the National Museum at Washington, Prof. True, in answering the same question, says:

"Natural History collections should in my opinion illustrate in the first place the natural resources of the state or province as fully as possible. In the zoological collection the quadrupeds and birds would be represented by stuffed skins, the fishes by specimens preserved in alcohol or by painted casts, the invertebrates, except insects, by specimens in alcohol. Insects should be shown by dry specimens on pins in the usual manner. In the Botanical collection, the plants of the province might be displayed in the form of well prepared dry specimens, arranged in frames similar to picture frames, but with glass on both sides called "wing" frames in the National Museum. These frames can be hinged on one side and hung together on pulleys or be placed flat against the walls.

"Minerals should be represented generally by good specimens of moderate size. Rocks by pieces dressed to a uniform size and shape. All this material should of course be arranged in a thoroughly scientific manner and labelled in such a way as to indicate the exact purpose for which it is exhibited.

"In the proper section should also be included vertebrate and invertebrate fossils. A small number of these objects properly arranged would be highly instructive.

"In large museums it is customary to preserve great numbers of duplicates of all natural history objects for the use of students engaged in research, though they are not exhibited, yet they are quite indispensable to students.

"A provincial museum would do well to have only an exhibition series in Natural history.

"An Industrial exhibit seems to me a dangerous factor to introduce into a museum of moderate size unless treated in a very conservative manner. A mere collection of implements, and machines and of products is of very little scientific value and of no great interest to the public. Such exhibits furthermore occupy a great deal of space. I think it would be most desirable if such exhibits were displayed to treat them historically, that is to show the progress or development of various arts and industries. Such a collection properly arranged is very instructive."

Your Committee from personal observation report that in general the American Museums are maintained within these lines, and that, with perhaps the exception of Boston and Cincinnati and it may be one or two others, the Institutions known as Museums do not include Fine Art collections. On examining into these exceptions, especially at Cincinnati, it will be found that they contain no precedent for your Committee to recommend special work of this kind; and your Committee would not feel safe in so doing without Legislative authority.

#### COLLECTIONS.

Your Committee report that they are placed in advantageous circumstances by the fact that the Ontario Government and the Canadian Institute have placed in their custody for exhibition the magnificent Archæological collection at present in the Canadian Institute, and have given assurance of their good will in aiding in the formation of a collection of the minerals of this province. Your Committee as the result of their inquiries are of the opinion that it is not advisable to make any purchases for the Museum, and are assured that donations sufficient to fill the rooms will be received within a very short period. One experienced curator said on this point:

"Objects of Natural History, Historical Relics, etc., have no fixed market value, and only persons of experience can give an opinion as to their real value in many cases. I would say also that in museums much more is obtained by donation than by purchase, in fact many persons have it in their power to present objects to a museum which cannot be obtained in the market. A museum cannot have too many friends."

Your Committee received most gratifying assurances from a number of Museums both in the United States and Canada that they would gladly exchange specimens.

## EXPENDITURE AND STAFF.

Your Committee does not anticipate expenditure beyond the maintaining of a staff which for the present would consist of a curator and one assistant; and the current expenditure for cases, lighting, carriage of specimens, and the expenses connected with the exhibition of specimens; and your Committee is of opinion that all this will not amount to more than about \$2,500 per annum.

Your Committee found that all the Museums visited were open between the hours, at the outside, of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., and that being thus open during daylight, no necessity existed for using artificial light.

Your Committee however, recommend that should it be found advisable to open for one or two special nights, that it be lit by electricity.

The general report of the curators of the museums visited was that we could not have too much light, and that the cases should be constructed so as to obstruct the light as little as possible. Sir William Dawson, whose Redpath Museum is so deservedly in high estimation, gave a number of important suggestions on this point to your Committee. Sir William Dawson expressed surprise that a city as large as Toronto had not taken steps to establish a museum long ago.

Your Committee were anxious to discover what collections were most eagerly sought after by the public, and amongst other things were informed that the people generally, are more or less interested in minerals and antiquities. The experience of several curators is that collections of minerals, especially gems, historical relics and stuffed birds were the most popular. A few peculiar objects such as mummies are especially attractive. These collections are quite diverse in character, and a Museum consisting of



such objects alone would perhaps not present a very agreeable appearance; but by making a judicious arrangement of them, the whole might be made most attractive.

Your Committee have received minute information in regard to the lighting, heating and general internal management of a Museum, the particulars of which would be too voluminous to be contained within this report, but they are filed away and in the hands of the Secretary.

Your Committee is of opinion that the upper portion of the Public Library building will answer the purposes and furnish space enough for the museum for years to come.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

A. R. BOSWELL,

Chairman, Museum Committee.

BOARD ROOM,

PUBLIC LIBRARY,

December, 1891.

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